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NEW YORK MAN SENTENCED FOR PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE – United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that MARIO TORO, 52, of 400 West 43rd Street, New York, NY, was sentenced late today to one year's probation for committing passport fraud. TORO pled guilty in November of 2004 to one charge of passport fraud in U.S. District Court in Concord.

In May, 2002, TORO, a Columbian citizen, submitted a passport application in which he claimed that he was born in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico. TORO was indicted in U.S. District Court in February of 2004, after agents of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service uncovered the fraud at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. TORO pleaded guilty to willfully and knowingly making false statements to the State Department in a passport application in order to fraudulently obtain a United States passport.

U. S. Attorney Colantuono highly commended the U. S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service for what he termed the "exceptionally diligent and efficient" handling of the investigation.

This case resulted from an ongoing initiative known as "Operation Checkmate" which is designed to identify false passport applications that are submitted for adjudication to the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The National Passport Center processes and adjudicates approximately two million applications each year, or one quarter of all United States passport applications. Operation Checkmate is a joint initiative of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Hampshire, the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General and the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

TORO was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Steven J. McAuliffe. Assistant U. S. Attorney Alfred Rubega prosecuted this case.